

Forest plan revision

Cooperating agencies meeting

May 9, 2013

The Cody

Cody, WY

Cooperators: Steve Jones, Jill Shockley Siggins, Steffen Cornell, Bo Bowman, Lee Livingston, Loren Grosskoff, John Lumley, Doug Thompson, Tim Woolley, Rick Huber, Rebekah Fitzgerald, Mark Conrad, Jessica Crowder

Forest Service: Paul Flanagan, Bryan Armel, Carrie Christman, Joe Alexander

Public: Barry Reiswig, Peggy Ruble, Bonnie Rice, Sara Domek, Kim Wilbert, Mike Blymyer, Ryan McConnaughey, Karen McCreery, Larry Todd, Charles Drimal, Barbara Cozzens, Gregory Kennett

Purpose of Meeting

- Continuation of last meeting; working on alignment with issues
- Explain where we are headed with final environmental impact statement

Timeline: now through FEIS publication

- Specialists completing response to comments
 - From comments noting edits to environmental impact statement (EIS); incorporating changes
- Final alternative is alternative G (alternative B evolved into alternative G with changes heard from public and cooperating agencies)
- New maps for oil and gas leasing, summer and winter motorized recreation, and adjusting management areas; new analysis numbers for EIS; consultation started with US Fish and Wildlife Service (135 days)
- In July, working on edits to draft plan; continue work on final environmental impact statement (FEIS); working on draft record of decision (ROD)
- Cooperating agencies meeting in July; will discuss plan direction (any changes)
- Final plan, FEIS, and draft Record of Decision to be discussed with Washington Office following Regional Office review and approval
- A 60 day objection process will follow the publication of the draft ROD with FEIS
- September-biological opinion will be provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service; send documents to printer in October; published by end of October (FEIS, draft ROD)
- Release of FEIS-public meetings (mid-November); format for presentations not yet determined

Oil and gas leasing

- Areas not suitable for surface occupancy— reviewed district by district
- Loren: Clark area-NSO would only be polygon that was crucial winter range-agreement with governor's office; there are no leases in areas that have been taken out; SCAC doesn't want it as NSO—compromise with governor's office to only include crucial winter range polygon as NSO; Steve-generally, negotiating from position of you taking away industry's opportunity, there's been a lot of take—local governments responsible for tax base-range of multiple uses across landscape (input from governor's office is based on industry's input to governor's office); Loren: for the record, we didn't agree with governor's office on this polygon; shaving the piece between Clark and winter range
- Buffer area around TE field? Discussion, but not agreement (governor's office did not agree)
- Stipulations other than NSO (South Fork area); what is really the risk to big game winter range? NSO is inappropriate, need to provide opportunities for industry
- Discussion of areas where we do not agree on the designation
- SCAC does not agree with State cooperators on some of the NSO mapping; using governor's mapping
- Lease applications on Forest that have not been consummated as leases in Dick Creek area; are keeping this area open
- Meeteetsee Conservation District has locally derived conservation plan through public hearing process; this is an area where we are saying existing protections are adequate to protect natural resources, the probability of anything happening is very small; no reason to categorically lock it up/offer no potential of development in such a large area
 - Does not necessarily mean Shoshone will follow; understand that some cooperators don't agree, we've listened/heard, we just don't agree
 - FLPMA-matching local plan by best degree possible—Meeteetsee believes that we must adhere; disagreement by Joe that we have to adhere to local plans (separate plans for separate purposes)

Dunoir Special Management Unit

- Need to be aligned with legislation—regarding mountain biking and snowmobile use
- Reviewed comments expressing both strong interest in mountain biking in area and those that felt mountain biking was not appropriate or aligned with legislation
- Letter from former senator Alan Simpson-rationale for why Dunoir was put into special management unit, not wilderness; intent of legislation was not to ban mountain bikes
- Forest leadership team discussion that if we are not going to designate as wilderness, should allow mountain biking; need to ensure that use does not degrade area
- Congresses job to designate wilderness; Shoshone cannot overstep and create de facto wilderness
- RO is going to do some more fact checking; do not want to propose something that is illegal or out of alignment; trying to get it right; not resolved yet
- Change from draft plan proposal; controversy –constituents may have something to say

- Thompson: discussions on compatibility of mountain biking in that area with existing uses; Fremont County-Lander as mountain biking epicenter—niche market, growing use —these routes needs to be there: support designated trails
- Needing to keep cooperating agencies posted on this issue

Wilderness

- Adding wilderness not in line with what constituents would like to see
- Still have areas outside of wilderness that are remarkable; protected given their roadless status
- Passion/support for certain areas for wilderness designation
 - Able to protect these areas with current direction
- Looking to leave things the way they are
- Working with regional office on wilderness

Special area designations

- Sawtooth Peatbeds Special Interest Area
 - Selected for botanical and hydrologic feature-can be protected by removing piece of proposed SIA that overlaps Morrison Jeep Trail; protecting resource on west side of road
 - Signage (interpretation)—generating more interest could create more damage; area-specific management plan would determine
- Beartooth Butte Research Natural Area
 - Dropping areas that are used for snowmobiling
 - Loren: snowmobile club agrees about top of Butte
 - Top of Butte will be excluded from snowmobiling
- Bald Ridge Research Natural Area and Pat O'Hara Research Natural Area
 - Were not in alternative B originally
 - Based on comments, in alternative G proposing to put these back in; Bald Ridge is continuation of what is going on at border (BLM ACEC)
- Kirwin Special Interest Area
 - Expanding Kirwin SIA (Double D ranch plus other historic areas based on public comments)
 - Interpretive funding—helped if in designation
 - Did not hear opposition before; changes line existing on map

Winter motorized use

- 1986 Plan allowed snowmobiling almost everywhere; was not as big a concern/issue; more powerful machines/more areas are accessible
- Cleaning up the maps
- Clarks Fork—some areas that we took out (areas behind crucial winter range were taken out-doesn't make sense to have to pass through area)
 - Painters Trail-gravel pit road—thought was going to remain available for snowmobiling? We did not change from draft

- Wapiti-not really any change, any roads that are open in winter/motorized traffic are open to snowmobiling; folks using snowmobiles to access cabins will still be allowed
 - If system road on ATV map, shows as open, remains open
- Wind River: No additional closures in Dubois area
- Washakie: opening areas in alternative G that were not included in alternative B
- Almost 600,000 acres available in alternative G (alternative B was around 400,000)

Summer motorized use

- There is a net reduction between alternative B and G
- System road changes (North end); all existing roads - no changes from what is on NVUM map
 - Can make modifications as long as don't impact secure habitat
- Morrison Jeep Trail-allows motorized used, just not expansion into Sawtooth Peatbeds SIA
- Clarks Fork canyon outside of grizzly bear primary conservation area (PCA)-eligible for improvement of trail? Yes.
- Rock Creek and Pickett Creek—ranger districts felt strongly that this area should be dropped from motorized use (8300+4500 acres)
- Any proposed trail has to go through NEPA process
- Wind River: some boundary clean up; biggest change was maintaining closure in Telephone Draw, the road there is maintained, but we won't be looking to expand motorized use in the area
- Washakie: Freak Mountain-currently closed, zone would like to see it remain closed (wildlife security area-not available for expansion)
- Between alternative B and G: 40,000 less acres available for adding trails (6000 acres in wild and scenic river corridors; PCA acreage; Rock Creek, Pickett Creek, Telephone Draw, and Freak mountain acres---added 21,000 acres elsewhere
 - Total available: 530,000 acres open (from 570,000 in alternative B)
 - Less than where we were in B
 - Areas that we did close, there were a lot of public comments on these areas (specifically, Telephone Draw)
- Would like to see mapping of alternative G (similar to alternative maps that were in DEIS)
 - We will provide these maps and GIS data this summer

Temporary roads in roadless

- Roadless rule does allow exceptions for temporary road building
 - Had gone beyond in draft in saying we wouldn't allow temporary roads
 - Forest health to include roadless write up
 - Broaden draft direction for temporary roads in inventoried roadless areas
- Would this language be consistent with other forests?
 - Older plans; roadless is so expansive so we are a different case

Other topics

- Comments about direction in plan

- Grizzly bear-livestock conflicts
 - Going beyond PCA language for livestock in plan; need to clean up language; PCA direction for livestock plus biological opinion done for grazing on the Shoshone last year (direction came out of that); tweaks beyond conservation strategy; clarify - (PCA language or based on biological opinion)
 - *Bryan: send Jessica Crowder the biological opinion for grazing*
 - Biological opinion included permittees input
 - Work with Jessica and other cooperators on language (we will cover this at July meeting)
 - Allotment would be retired if there are conflicts with grizzlies—language is to be flexible-trying to look for other options (not retiring allotment as first choice) – request to fix so that it doesn’t appear that this is the first step to take--- communication rather than direction issue
- Timber and forest health
 - Language issue in plan-we are still working on that (this will be a July topic)
 - What is driving this issue? Just make sure we are not restricting opportunities; including timber in forest health (emphasize what forest treatments are available)
 - Is commercial harvest off the table for forest health? That is not the Shoshone’s intent

Adjacent land use plans analysis

- Process: Requirement of 1982 planning rule; looked at land use plans of each county/conservation district/Wind River tribes; addressing interrelated impact-how Forest would deal with impacts and consider resolutions
- Overall, there was a lot in common between plans (supporting multiple use, direction to protect resources, and promote economic health of local communities)
- Conflicts:
 - Fremont County: maintain and implement allowable sale quantity of timber consistent with 1986 Forest Plan—draft plan alternative B: predicted volume is less but allowable sale quantity is greater
 - Hot Springs County: no net loss of AUMs—draft plan alternative B: continuation of AUMs—allowing variance of plus or minus 10 percent of that based on resource conditions
 - Different emphasis in plans—strong emphasis on minerals in Meeteetse plan
- A lot of commonalities among goals and have been resolving differences over years; will email draft document to cooperators; *post on website in a couple weeks after the counties/conservation districts review*
- Summary of the findings will be published in FEIS
- Thompson: economic impact—insufficiency of economic analysis in federal plans; considering county/conservation districts’ interests in economics, not comfortable with where the Shoshone is in analysis

- Strategies to do a better job of analysis
 - Discussions with RO and Tex on economic analysis; expectations different than what was in draft
- Asking that economic analysis be improved; and in comparison of plans address economic consistency
- Were objectives and policies looked at in plans?
 - Yes, and some are included in the comparison as well
 - Please review the analysis and let Carrie know of any issues, and desired edits
- Comparison with various State plans?
 - State trails plan? Loren reviewed the state trails plan and found no conflicts of concern
 - Consistency review—choosing to do with Governor’s office (this is the point of incorporating State specialists); Governor’s office will have conversation with RO of how to handle the consistency review
- Cooperators prefer to review the adjacency analysis before it is posted to the website
- Socioeconomic language regarding recreation use
 - Mountain biking in Dunoir—hard to put a number on; how can counties provide information as we develop qualitative narratives on this type of use (would need this by first week of June)

Public comments

- Greg Kennett (as technical support for SCAC): objection/appeal process; draft says 219.32 for objection process—we are using the objection process included in new rule, guidance to do that even under 1982 planning rule – *(we will clean up the language in the FEIS to be consistent with the objection process, when the draft was released, the following statement was posted on the web, and remains on the Shoshone planning website:*
 “The final plan and final environmental impact statement will be published in the summer of 2013. This will be followed by a 60-day objection period. To qualify for standing to object, objections must be linked to a prior substantive comment submitted during opportunities for comment on the proposed decision. Objections will be resolved and/or responded to within 90 days following the 60-day objection period. The record of decision for the revised plan will not be issued until the reviewing officer has responded to the objections.”)
 - ERG economist is working on economic data regarding recreation use (anyone with additional economic information may share it with the Forest by June 7)
 - New trails-will Shoshone still be adding three loop trails as an objective?
 - Possibly not, possibly leave this possibility open—however, leaving in language could encourage more funding
- Sara Domek-WWA-will maps be available in some form to public? Can be available to everybody—can post on website when available
 - How specifically the public comments are being taken into account with decisions made regarding wilderness? We’ve discussed at meetings, amongst ourselves—filtered through IDT, weighing one way or another

- Any differences in need-based analysis? Comments consistent with public meetings, strong positions on the ends-but general comments were maintain status quo; a bunch of comments on need for more wilderness - write up in appendix C (changes will be made based on those comments to that section)
- Mountain biking in Dunoir-1972 law; when looking at 1972 law, it says non-vehicular (keep in mind when evaluating Dunoir with that issue)
- Bonnie Rice requests that the grazing biological opinion be made available to public as well (*post on website*)

Closing

- July meeting will focus on standards, guidelines, goals, and objectives; discussion on economic analysis
- How many times have we met with cooperators: 76 public meetings, 32 cooperating agencies meetings, several field trips
- Have worked through and had agreement on issues; moving past conflicts; happy with relationships
- Monitoring—getting together after plan is done annually or semi-annually---address at July meeting (what this concept would look like) [also discussions on travel management piece]
- Date and place of July—not ready to pick a date (second half of July (19-23rd most cooperators not available)

kp/cc